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# Mauritania VE and Media Assessment

PEACE THROUGH EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING (PELA)  
ACTIVITY

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# Outline

- Purpose
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- Results & Discussion
- Programmatic Recommendations
- Knowledge Gaps



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# Purpose of the Assessment

To assess and analyze the risks and drivers of violent extremism (VE) in Mauritania and identify gaps in knowledge, as well as to assess the media landscape in order to inform USAID programming in Mauritania.



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# Objectives of the Assessment

- Provide an overview of VE trends and drivers in Mauritania since 2015, as well as to conduct fieldwork on local perceptions of VE. The overview seeks to distinguish, to the extent possible, subnational drivers from national drivers;
- Provide an overview of the media landscape in Mauritania, particularly its ability to create and disseminate content;
- When and where possible, identify ways to bridge or build upon what USAID/Mauritania and State Department are currently doing in the countering violent extremism (CVE) space in Mauritania;
- Determine the knowledge gaps; and
- Provide recommendations on what further assessment or research may be necessary to understand VE in Mauritania.



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# Assessment Questions

1. What are the principal drivers of extremism in Mauritania? What are the principal social fractures that have been or could be exploited by extremists?
  - What geographic areas are the most at risk of violent extremism?
  - Who are the demographic groups most susceptible to these drivers?
  - What is the primary audience in terms of addressing the identified drivers or fractures?
  - Are there important secondary audiences or geographic areas in terms of addressing the identified drivers or fractures?
  
2. What is the role of the Mauritania media landscape within the context of violent extremism?
  - How are violent extremism organizations (VEOs) using media to further their cause? (Through recruitment, through undermining of CVE efforts, etc...)
  - How is media currently being used to address extremism drivers?
  - What drivers or fractures can media and communications programming help to mitigate?
  - What is the capacity of media outlets to produce content and disseminate it effectively to our primary and secondary audiences?
  - Are there any potential, capable or promising local partners in the field of media and communications for CVE?



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# Methodology

## Mixed method approach:

- Review of 77 pieces of literature and documents
- Qualitative data collection and analysis
- Survey data collection and analysis

## Assessment locations:

- Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Hodh el-Gharbi, Trarza, and Assaba



## QI Results and Discussion: What are the principal drivers of extremism in Mauritania? What are the principal social fractures that have been or could be exploited by extremists?

Driver	National	Nouakchott	Nouadhibou	Trarza	Hodh el-Gharbi	Assaba
Poor governance	Corruption	Uncoordinated economic development	Uncontrolled economic expansion	Lagging infrastructure development	Lack of access to capital resources	Lack of basic resources
Poverty and relative deprivation						
Existence of criminal activity and illicit networks						
Marginalization and exclusion of specific groups						
Unmet expectations around the role of education						
Social media						
Ideological extremism						
Sociocultural tensions						
Inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms						

## QI/SQI Results and Discussion: What geographic areas are the most at risk of violent extremism?



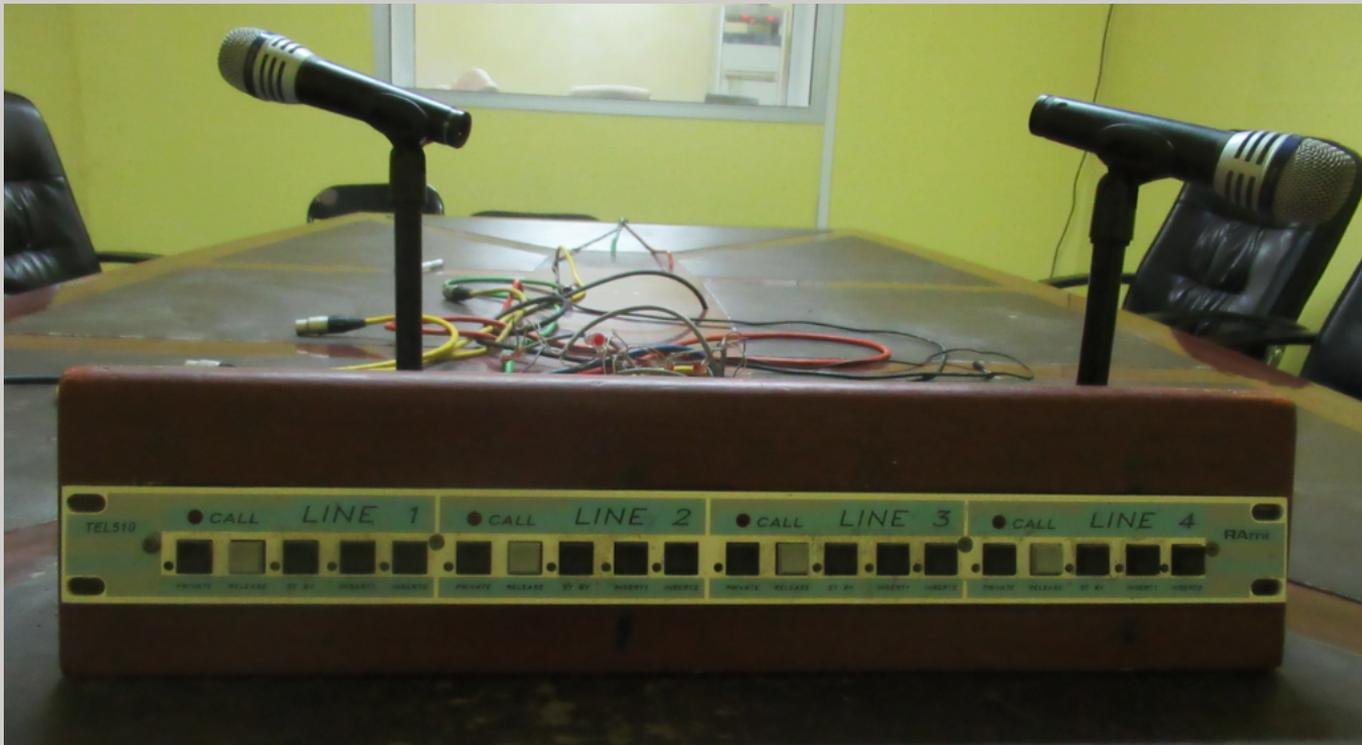
## QI/SQ2 Results and Discussion: Who are the demographic groups most susceptible to these drivers?

- Women and youth are among the most at-risk demographic groups we identified, with variation sub-nationally
- The evidence to support this finding is thin



## QI/SQ3 Results and Discussion: What is the primary audience in terms of addressing the identified drivers or fractures?

- The primary audience for addressing the drivers are the main demographic groups identified as “at-risk,” as well as marginalized groups such as the Haratine and those suffering from lack of access to basic resources



## QI/SQ4 Results and Discussion: Are there important secondary audiences or geographic areas in terms of addressing the identified drivers or fractures?

- Government and local leaders are important secondary audiences across geographic areas.



## Q2 Results and Discussion: What is the role of the Mauritania media landscape within the context of violent extremism?

- Mauritanian media has potential to be a key actor in efforts to counter VE in Mauritania; however, it needs capacity building and professionalization in order to be effective.



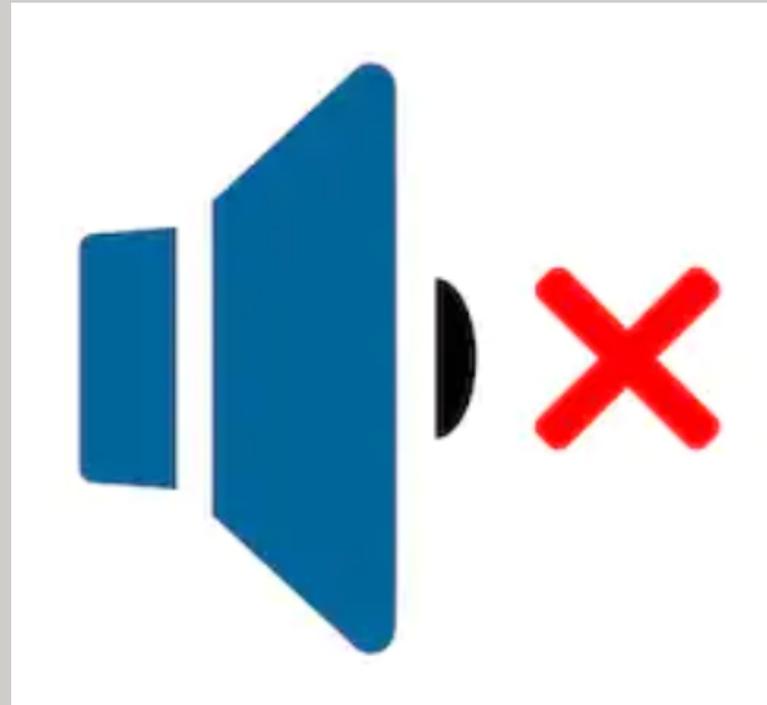
## Q2/SQ1 Results and Discussion: How are violent extremism organizations (VEOs) using media to further their cause?

- A full diagnosis of this question was not possible given the resource constraints of this assessment, such as the teams' lack of access to classified intelligence. However, we collected a few anecdotes about the ways that VEOs are using social media to attempt to recruit in Boutilimitt
- The assessment team discovered no overt usage of media to recruit



## Q2/SQ2 Results and Discussion: How is media currently being used to address extremism drivers?

- The media is not currently being used to address VE in any strategic or systematic manner.



## Q2/SQ3 Results and Discussion: What drivers or fractures can media and communications programming help to mitigate?

- With adequate strategic planning, capacity building, and political will, the media could be used to program against most of the drivers identified in this assessment.
- Media could provide a platform for dialogue to address social fractures or to debate Islamic teachings.
- Media could also provide information about how to access public services.



## Q2/SQ4 Results and Discussion: What is the capacity of media outlets to produce content and disseminate it effectively to our primary and secondary audiences?

- The current capacity for media outlets to produce content and disseminate effectively is low, due in large part to the lack of basic infrastructure to broadcast beyond major urban centers.
- One way to address this would be to propagate community-based radio.



## Q2/SQ5 Results and Discussion: Are there any potential, capable or promising local partners in the field of media and communications for CVE?

- Existing local partners, such as the G5-Sahel, could be effective partners for CVE programming in the media sector.
- In terms of Mauritanian local partners, we did not identify any viable partners in this assessment.
- While there are a few media associations, the media assessment determines that they are technically lacking and consequently, ineffective.



# Recommendations: Programmatic responses to VE drivers

Driver	National	Nouakchott	Nouadhibou	Trarza	Hodh el-Gharbi	Assaba
Poor governance	Corruption	Uncoordinated economic development	Uncontrolled economic expansion	Lagging infrastructure development	Lack of access to capital resources	Lack of basic resources
	P4P (National level); EMELI 2.0 (Nouadhibou and Nouakchott); Civic engagement and governance (all); Education (subnational units); Public-private partnerships (Nouakchott and Nouadhibou)					
Poverty and relative deprivation						
	EMELI; Education; Public-private partnerships; PYD					
Existence of criminal activity and illicit networks						
	Law Enforcement; MIST					
Marginalization and exclusion of specific groups						
	EMELI; Civic engagement and governance; PYD					
Unmet expectations around the role of education						
	EMELI; Education; Public-private partnerships; PYD					
Social media						
	SADAQA; Media					
Ideological extremism						
	SADAQA					
Sociocultural tensions						
	Civic engagement and governance (e.g., V4P)					



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# Main knowledge gaps

- The evidence we used to understand *who* is vulnerable to VE in Mauritania is weak, based almost solely on hearsay, opinions, and stereotypes
- Resiliencies to VE were not considered in this assessment
- Specific VE drivers in Hodh el-Chargui were not analyzed in this assessment
- Gender dynamics around VE were not analyzed in this assessment
- VEO activity in Mauritania including recruitment, communications, financing, supply chains, etc.
- Which CSOs are interested in working in communications and media and how do we build their capacity to do so?



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# Disclaimers

- This assessment was made possible with funding from the USAID West Africa Regional Peace and Governance Office through the Peace Through Evaluation, Learning, and Adapting (PELA) activity. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views or opinion of the U.S. Government.



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